

Amendments to the Claims:

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1-13. (Canceled)

14. (Currently Amended) A method of drying a honeycomb formed body comprising an outer wall, partition walls disposed inside the outer wall, and a plurality of cells surrounded by the partition walls and extending in an axial direction of the honeycomb formed body,

~~characterized in that the method comprises~~comprising a drying step starting in a state of covering at least a part of the outer wall with a guide covering the outer wall so as not to come into contact with the outer wall, wherein the extent that the guide covers the outer wall is in the range of 20 to 100% relative to the surface area of the entire outer wall.

15. (Previously Presented) The method of drying a honeycomb formed body according to claim 14, wherein the drying step starts with a distance between the outer wall and the guide covering the outer wall of 0.1 to 1.0 mm.

16. (Currently Amended) The method of drying a honeycomb formed body according to claim ~~14~~17, wherein in the case where the outer wall and the guide come into contact with each other during the drying step that starts with a distance between the outer wall and the guide covering the outer wall of 0.1 mm or less, the pressure applied to the outer wall from the guide is less than 0.2 MPa.

17. (Withdrawn-Currently Amended) A method of drying a honeycomb formed body comprising an outer wall, partition walls disposed inside the outer wall, and cells surrounded by the partition walls and extending in an axial direction of the honeycomb formed body,

~~characterized in that the method comprises~~comprising a drying step drying in a state of covering at least a part of the outer wall with a guide covering the outer wall so as to come into contact with the outer wall, the extent that the guide covers the outer wall is in the range of 20 to 100% relative to the surface area of the entire outer wall,

pressure from the guide to the outer wall being less than 0.2 MPa at a part where the guide comes into contact with the outer wall in the drying step.

18. (Previously Presented) The method of drying a honeycomb formed body according to claim 14, wherein the guide has an opening.

19. (Withdrawn) The method of drying a honeycomb formed body according to claim 17, wherein the guide has an opening.

20-21. (Canceled)

22. (Previously Presented) The method of drying a honeycomb formed body according to claim 14, wherein the drying includes a microwave drying step and a hot air drying step, and the hot air drying step is conducted after the microwave drying step.

23. (Withdrawn) The method of drying a honeycomb formed body according to claim 17, wherein the drying includes a microwave drying step and a hot air drying step, and the hot air drying step is conducted after the microwave drying step.

24. (Previously Presented) The method of drying a honeycomb formed body according to claim 22, wherein at least in the hot air drying step, drying is started in a state where at least a part of the outer wall is covered with the guide.

25. (Withdrawn) The method of drying a honeycomb formed body according to claim 23, wherein at least in the hot air drying step, drying is started in a state where at least a part of the outer wall is covered with the guide.

26. (Previously Presented) The method of drying a honeycomb formed body according to claim 22, wherein at least in the microwave drying step, drying is started in a state where at least a part of the outer wall is covered with the guide.
27. (Withdrawn) The method of drying a honeycomb formed body according to claim 23, wherein at least in the microwave drying step, drying is started in a state where at least a part of the outer wall is covered with the guide.
28. (Previously Presented) The method of drying a honeycomb formed body according to claim 22, wherein in the microwave drying step, microwave output per unit mass of the honeycomb formed body is in the range of 0.5 to 3 kW/kg.
29. (Withdrawn) The method of drying a honeycomb formed body according to claim 23, wherein in the microwave drying step, microwave output per unit mass of the honeycomb formed body is in the range of 0.5 to 3 kW/kg.
30. (Previously Presented) The method of drying a honeycomb formed body according to claim 22, wherein dewatering ratio in the microwave drying step is 30 to 80% by mass, relative to the total dewatering amount in the complete drying step.
31. (Withdrawn) The method of drying a honeycomb formed body according to claim 23, wherein dewatering ratio in the microwave drying step is 30 to 80% by mass, relative to the total dewatering amount in the complete drying step.
32. (Previously Presented) The method of drying a honeycomb formed body according to claim 14, wherein the honeycomb formed body contains ceramics as a main component.
33. (Previously Presented) The method of drying a honeycomb formed body according to claim 32, wherein the main component contains silicon carbide.